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REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCLUDING DOCUMENT OF THE TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY: REGIONAL CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Letter dated 7 August 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Gabon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the ninth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which took place in Libreville from 7 to 11 July 1997 (see annex), and to request you to have this text and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 72 (b) of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Charles ESSONGHÉ
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* Reissued for technical reasons.

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ANNEX

Report of the Ninth Ministerial Meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Libreville, Gabon, 7-11 July 1997

INTRODUCTION

1. The ninth meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was held at Libreville from 7 to 11 July 1997 at the ministerial level.

2. The following States members took part in the meeting: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe.

3. Rwanda was unable to attend.

4. The following participated in the work of the meeting as observers: the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations; the representative of the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU); the representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and the representative of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation.

5. At the invitation of the Government of Gabon, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council were invited to the meeting. Representatives of China, France, the Russian Federation and the United States of America attended the meeting. The United Kingdom was unable to attend.

6. At the opening ceremony of the meeting statements were made by: the current President of the Committee, His Excellency Mr. Destin Arsène Tsaty-Boungou, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and Francophone Affairs of the Republic of the Congo; Mr. Mohamed Sahnoun, the representative of the Secretaries General of the United Nations and of the Organization of African Unity for the Great Lakes region, who read out a message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations; and H.E. Dr. Paulin Obame Nguema, Prime Minister, Head of Government of the Gabonese Republic, who formally opened the meeting.

A. Adoption of the agenda

7. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Election of officers.

2. Review of the activities of the Committee.

3. Review of the geopolitical situation in Central Africa.

4. Involvement of the officers of the Committee in the peace processes in Central Africa and review of the plan of action of the Committee.

5. Exchange of views on improving cooperation for conflict prevention and management in Central Africa: the role of the permanent members of the Security Council.

6. Recommendations.

7. Consideration and adoption of the final report of the ninth meeting of the Committee.

B. Progress of work

1. Election of officers

8. The Committee elected new officers as follows:

Chairman: Gabon

First Vice-Chairman: Angola

Second Vice-President: Chad

Rapporteur: Burundi

2. Review of the activities of the Committee

9. The Committee took note of the report submitted by His Excellency Mr. Destin Arsène Tsaty-Boungou, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and Francophone Affairs of the Republic of the Congo, in his capacity as outgoing Chairman.

10. The report reflected increased recognition of the role played by the Committee in the search for ways and means to find solutions to the ongoing crises and conflicts in the subregion.

11. The Committee also noted the effective involvement of the heads of State and Government of member countries in its activities, in particular their participation in 1996 in the Yaoundé and Brazzaville summit meetings.

12. The Committee recalled that at the Yaoundé summit meeting, which was held alongside the thirty-second summit meeting of OAU, eight heads of State and Government had solemnly signed the Non-Aggression Pact. To date, nine States members of the Committee have signed the Pact.

13. The Committee noted that Angola had reaffirmed its willingness to sign the Pact as soon as possible. It appealed to Rwanda to do likewise and invited member States which had already signed the Pact to ratify it with a view to its entry into force.

14. The outgoing Chairman also stressed the Committee's contribution to the search for solutions to the crisis in the former Zaire, and welcomed the organization of a training seminar for instructors in peacekeeping operations.

15. The outgoing officers made preparations for the subregional conference on the topic "Democratic institutions and peace in Central Africa", which was to be held before the end of 1997.

16. Lastly, the officers took note of the study prepared at their request by the Committee secretariat on the establishment of a subregional early warning mechanism, to be based in Libreville, Gabon. The project had been submitted to UNDP with a request for assistance in financing that mechanism.

17. The Committee commended the outgoing Chairman for the efforts he had made in the exercise of his mandate.

3. Review of the geopolitical situation in Central Africa

18. Introducing the item, the new Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Casimir Oye Mba, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Gabonese Republic, noted with concern the deterioration of the situation of peace and stability in many of the Committee's member countries. He stressed the indivisible nature of subregional peace and security, emphasizing that no country in Central Africa would experience lasting peace as long as areas of tension remained in other countries of the subregion.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

19. The Committee welcomed the calming of the situation after the upheaval which had taken place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and noted with satisfaction the determination of the United Nations to work closely with the new authorities of that country with a view to ensuring its reconstruction, stability and progress in respect for democratic principles and the rule of law.

Burundi

20. The Committee welcomed the improvement in the overall situation in Burundi and encouraged the Government of Burundi to continue the dialogue with all the parties to the conflict with a view to restoring the democratic process and establishing all the necessary conditions for true national reconciliation.

21. Concerned about the dire consequences of the embargo against Burundi for the most vulnerable social groups in that country, the Committee once again issued an appeal to the States parties to the Arusha Accords for the total lifting of the embargo.

22. Noting the great efforts made by States to receive refugees in their territories, the Committee stressed the need for host countries to ensure that the international conventions relating to the status of refugees were fully respected. The Committee also urged the countries of origin to establish

conditions to facilitate the return of the refugees to their respective countries in dignity and security.

Republic of the Congo

23. The Committee expressed deep concern about the political and military crisis which was engulfing the Republic of the Congo and was causing much loss of innocent human life.

24. It urged the parties to the conflict to do everything possible to bring about an end to the hostilities by promoting legal and political solutions based on constitutional provisions.

25. The Committee also made an appeal to the international community and to the United Nations Security Council in particular for the rapid deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force in the Congo to help promote the democratic process in that country.

Angola

26. The Committee welcomed the positive developments in the situation in Angola which had been marked by the installation, on 11 April 1997, of a Government of national unity, which included representatives of the União Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA), and by the return to the National Assembly of UNITA deputies.

27. The Committee expressed support for that process, which paved the way for the full implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, and called on all the parties to work in good faith for the establishment of lasting peace with a view to national reconciliation. In that respect, it supported the efforts of the Angolan Government to prevent any action which might endanger the full implementation of the Lusaka Protocol.

Chad

28. The Committee noted with satisfaction the restoration of peace in Chad and the consolidation of the democratic process in that country.

29. It welcomed the efforts made by the Government of Chad to combat illicit arms trafficking.

30. The Committee also commended the efforts which had led to a reduction in the size of the army and strongly appealed to the international community to support the Government of Chad in the reintegration of demobilized soldiers in society.

Cameroon

31. With regard to Cameroon, the Committee expressed its concern about the persistence of tension and military incidents in the disputed area of Bakassi. It called on the International Court of Justice to speed up the case in progress with a view to bringing about a final settlement of the dispute.

32. The Committee also noted the success of the recent elections in Cameroon.

Sao Tome and Principe

33. The Committee noted with satisfaction the significant efforts made by the Government of Sao Tome and Principe in 1997 to consolidate the democratic process in that country.

Central African Republic

34. In the Central African Republic, the Committee welcomed the improvement of the political and security situation and commended the decisive role played at the local level by the international monitoring committee in facilitating the work of the Inter-African Force to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB). The Committee welcomed the efforts of General Amadou Toumani Touré, which had led to the signing of a ceasefire agreement on 2 July 1997 and the adoption of a timetable for the reintegration of mutinous soldiers and their weapons in their respective barracks.

35. The Committee believed that the return of the soldiers to their respective units constituted significant progress which should mark the end of the uprising in that country.

Equatorial Guinea

36. The Committee welcomed the efforts made in Equatorial Guinea to consolidate the democratic process in that country. In that connection it took note of the signing of a national pact between the Government and all the political parties and of a document to evaluate that pact.

4. Involvement of the officers of the Committee in the peace processes in Central Africa and consideration of the plan of action of the Committee

37. The current disturbing situation in the subregion and the need to take effective steps for crisis and conflict prevention would, according to the Committee's previous recommendations, require greater involvement of the officers of the Committee in current and future mediation efforts.

38. The Committee therefore called upon its Chairman to use his good offices and to participate fully in the mediation of the crisis and conflict situations in the subregion.

39. The Committee agreed that its activities should be based on the following programme of action.

Political and diplomatic measures

40. Considering the seriousness of the situation in the Republic of the Congo and the imperative need to end the violence plaguing that country, the Committee fully supports the appeal made to the Security Council by His Excellency

El Hadj Omar Bongo, President of the Gabonese Republic and head of the International Mediation Committee, for the deployment of an intervention force in that country. In this connection, the Committee strongly encourages member States to participate in such a force.

41. The Committee mandates its President and the other officers of the Committee to meet with the Secretary-General of the United Nations during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly to request his ongoing support for the Committee's efforts. On that occasion, the officers will convey the Committee's desire to revert to its initial practice of holding two ministerial meetings a year.

42. The Committee mandates its officers, during their stay in New York, to pursue consultations with the members of the Security Council with a view to strengthening cooperation between that body and the countries of Central Africa in seeking ways and means of consolidating peace in the subregion.

43. The Committee mandates its officers to contact the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union and other partners of the subregion to ensure the effective establishment of the early warning mechanism, preferably by the end of 1997.

44. As proposed by the outgoing Chairman, the Committee recommends that a conference be held by the end of the year on the topic "Democratic institutions and peace in Central Africa". The Committee welcomes the offer of Equatorial Guinea to host this conference. The Committee requests its Chairman to contact the Government of Equatorial Guinea to confirm the date, place and organizational arrangements for this important conference.

45. Considering the importance of the Non-Aggression Pact, the Committee mandates the Chairman to approach the Angolan and Rwandan authorities with a view to obtaining their signatures.

46. The Committee takes note of the message from the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the ninth ministerial meeting. It welcomes that Organization's willingness to make concerted efforts towards peace, in cooperation with subregional institutions, and requests its Chairman to contact the OAU General Secretariat with a view to establishing specific modalities of cooperation between that body and the Committee.

47. The Committee requests OAU to provide assistance, within the limits of its resources, for the implementation of the Committee's plan of action.

Defence and security measures

48. As requested by the heads of State and Government of the countries members of the Committee, the Committee once again calls upon the ministers of defence and of the interior of its member countries to meet no later than December 1997 to draw up a practical programme for combating the illegal circulation of weapons and drugs in the subregion. Member States are invited to submit their suggestions to the Chairman by the end of September 1997 so that he may prepare a draft programme for consideration at the meeting.

49. The Committee mandates its Chairman to request the assistance and cooperation of the United Nations Secretariat, UNDP, the World Bank, the European Union and other organizations in helping the relevant countries of the subregion to set up programmes for demobilizing militias and former combatants, discharging them from military service and reintegrating them into civilian life.

50. Based on the experience acquired in the training seminar on peacekeeping operations organized by the Committee in Yaoundé in September 1996, the Committee calls upon the ministers of defence to identify ways of building the subregion's peacekeeping capacity. In this connection, the Committee mandates its Chairman to seek the support of the United Nations Secretariat for the organization of additional seminars to train subregional personnel in peacekeeping operations.

51. Accordingly, the Committee reiterates the importance of expediting the establishment of peacekeeping units within the armed forces of member countries.

52. As a practical means of ensuring that the countries of the subregion are better prepared to participate effectively in future peacekeeping operations, the Committee underscores the importance of organizing joint military exercises to simulate the conduct of standard peacekeeping operations. To this end, the Committee calls upon its Chairman to submit proposals by the end of October 1997 on arrangements for holding such exercises in March 1998.

53. The Committee mandates its Chairman to seek assistance from the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the European Union, the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation and the rest of the international community for the organization of seminars to familiarize the armed forces and security forces with respect for the rule of law and the army's role in a democracy.

54. Considering that the organization of sporting events between the armies of the States of the subregion is likely to enhance brotherhood in arms and to promote mutual confidence between States, the Committee requests the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA) and the Organization for Military Sport in Africa to study the possibility of giving a new impetus to the organization of military sports competitions in Central Africa.

5. Exchange of views on improving cooperation for conflict prevention and management in Central Africa: The role of the permanent members of the Security Council

55. At the invitation of the Gabonese Government, the representatives of China, France, the United States of America and the Russian Federation took part in the work of the Committee. The United Kingdom was unable to do so.

56. During the exchange of views, the permanent members unanimously recognized the importance of the Committee's work and confirmed the commitment made in Denver, during the G-8 summit, to help African countries, and particularly those in Central Africa, to build their capacities in the area of peacekeeping and

conflict prevention. They recognized the crucial importance of setting up structures and initiatives designed to prevent the outbreak of armed conflicts.

57. In that context, the representative of France reported to the Committee on the joint initiative which his country, the United States of America and the United Kingdom were carrying out with a view to building African peacekeeping capacity.

58. The representative of the United States of America, in turn, reported to the Committee on the programmes which his country was implementing, both alone and with its partners, to help build African capacities for prevention, conflict settlement and peacekeeping activities. He listed a number of preconditions for the deployment of a peacekeeping operation by the Security Council. He emphasized, inter alia, that an effective ceasefire must be observed before a decision could be taken to deploy a peacekeeping operation.

59. The representative of China, while regretting the persistence of conflicts in Africa which resulted in the loss of human lives and significant material damage, reaffirmed his country's support for the efforts being made by the Central African countries to settle their differences peacefully. He said that his country would examine carefully the plan of action adopted by the Committee at the current meeting.

60. The representative of the Russian Federation highlighted the need to promote peacekeeping activities and to establish a more reliable system of crisis detection and prevention.

61. The representative of UNDP said that his organization supported the initiative to establish an early warning mechanism in Central Africa. In that connection, he informed the Committee that the Regional Bureau for Africa and the Emergency Response Division at UNDP headquarters were studying the plan for financing the mechanism which the Committee secretariat had submitted to them at the request of the officers.

62. The Committee, while recognizing that its members had the primary responsibility for peacekeeping in their countries, requested the assistance of the members of the Security Council in implementing its plan of action for peace and stability in Central Africa.

RECOMMENDATIONS

63. The Committee, having underscored the crucial role played by the Inter-African Force to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) in resolving the Central African crisis, requests its Chairman to bring the matter before the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretary-General of the United Nations in order to seek their assistance to MISAB so that it could implement the Bangui peace agreements fully.

64. To strengthen the Committee's activities and to enable it to respond more effectively to the subregion's need for conflict prevention and conflict settlement initiatives in Central Africa, the Committee requests its Chairman to

convey to the Secretary-General of the United Nations its strong desire to revive its practice of holding two annual meetings at the ministerial level.

65. While thanking the countries which have contributed to the United Nations Trust Fund set up by the Secretary-General to finance the implementation of the Committee's programme of activities, the Committee again appeals to all States and to the international community to continue to give generously to the Fund.